

REMARKS

Claims 1-2 are all the claims pending in the application.

Applicants have amended page 5 of the specification in order to insert before the seventh full paragraph (line 23) the heading "DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION."

No new matter has been added.

Referring to the **Office Action Summary** page, the claim to foreign priority and receipt of the foreign priority document has not been acknowledged. The priority document (JP 2002-374827) was submitted with the application on December 16, 2003. Applicants kindly request the appropriate acknowledgments in the next communication from the Examiner.

The Office Action contains a single rejection. Specifically, at Section No. 2 (page 2), Claims 1 and 2 are rejected under **35 U.S.C. § 102(b)** as allegedly being anticipated by or, in the alternative, under **35 U.S.C. § 103(a)** as allegedly being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,681,467 ("US '467"). According to the Examiner, US '467 discloses "that materials are sandwiched along the folded membrane 25a (col 1 lines 25+)." The Examiner also states that "[t]he folded membrane is heated with means and then pressed using compression dies (col 10 lines 10+)."

Applicants respectfully traverse.

US '467 does not disclose or suggest each and every element of independent Claim 1. Specifically, US '467 does not disclose **the combination** of (i) forming beforehand in a membrane a folding initiation part reduced in bending resistance along each of folding lines for the membrane, and folding the membrane at the folding initiation parts, and (ii) heating and pressing the membrane during and/or after the folding.

As an illustrative example of elements (i) and (ii) above of the claimed invention, Applicants would like to direct the Examiner's attention to the description at page 10, line 16, through page 11, line 8, and page 12, lines 1-16, in conjunction with FIGS. 3(a) and (b).

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US '467 discloses a method in which creases are formed with heating. Thus, while US '467 discloses forming creases with heating, it does not disclose *the combination* of (i) forming beforehand in a membrane a folding initiation part reduced in bending resistance along each of folding lines for the membrane, and folding the membrane at the folding initiation parts, and (ii) heating and pressing the membrane during and/or after the folding.

The disclosures of US '467 identified by the Examiner (column 1, lines 25+, and column 10, lines 10+) do not disclose or suggest forming beforehand in a membrane a folding initiation part reduced in bending resistance along each of folding lines for the membrane, and folding the membrane at the folding initiation parts. Applicants would like to direct the Examiner's attention to the disclosure at column 4, line 34, through column 5, line 62, together with FIGS. 3(a) through 3(e), as a clear example of the fact that US '467 does not disclose or suggest forming beforehand in a membrane a folding initiation part reduced in bending resistance along each of folding lines for the membrane, and folding the membrane at the folding initiation parts.

The disclosure of a "folded membrane 25a" in US '467 says nothing about having formed a folding initiation part prior to folding the membrane, as required by present Claim 1.

For the foregoing reasons, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw the §102/§103 rejection of Claims 1 and 2.

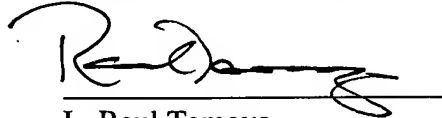
Reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

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The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Raul Tamayo', written over a horizontal line.

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